



## Ravenwood Park Citizens Association

June 9, 2014

John Thillmann, Chairman  
Seven Corners Revitalization Task Force

Members  
Seven Corners Revitalization Task Force

VIA EMAIL and HAND DELIVERY

Dear Mr. Thillmann and Members of the Task Force –

The members of the board of the Ravenwood Park Citizens Association (RPCA) thank you for your time and commitment to the effort to revitalize Seven Corners. Your work has been wide-ranging and comprehensive.

We also thank you for meeting with the RPCA on Monday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, to update our community on your ongoing work and to solicit our input and perspective.

We understand that the revitalization of Seven Corners will require that the community rethink issues such as appropriate use, density and transportation. We also recognize that re-planning, by its very nature, means you are not working with a blank slate; that there are existing communities and commercial spaces that will be deeply affected by what you and, ultimately, the Board of Supervisors plan for our community.

To that end, we support and encourage you to adopt the following bedrock principles in the plan amendment language:

1. The transportation plan should be both fully funded and politically acceptable not only to Fairfax County but also the bordering jurisdictions of Falls Church City and Arlington County and to the Virginia Department of Transportation before the Comprehensive Plan is amended to allow for additional development and density in Seven Corners.

We are deeply concerned that the transportation plan presented at our community meeting, i.e., the double diamond, is both unfunded and politically infeasible.

Developers may, during the rezoning process, be asked to proffer transportation improvements. Typically, these proffers address ingress and egress from their developments. We might anticipate that they will provide funds to add turn lanes to Route 7, for example, and better manage internal traffic flow. But it will be up to the county and the state to fund the area wide road improvements.

We are also concerned that neither Falls Church City nor Arlington County has an interest in moving more traffic on their streets and more Metro users through their jurisdictions to and from the East Falls Church Metro station. The Metro system is already straining to move riders on the Orange line through



Falls Church and Arlington during rush hours. Parking spaces at the East Falls Church Metro station are already filled by early morning. The line will become even more congested when the Silver Line opens and again when the second phase of the Silver Line is opened to Dulles Airport. Metro has already had to make an accommodation, re-routing some Blue Line trains away from Rosslyn and the Metro tunnel and on to the bridge used by the Yellow Line.

An article in yesterday's Washington Post outlines the challenges that Metro will face. Robert Thompson, also known as Dr. Gridlock, reports that Metro has historically underestimated the number of new riders that use Metro when new stations open. Not surprisingly he reports that "[m]any Orange Line riders who board trains at stations from East Falls Church through Rosslyn have expressed concern that their platforms will become even more crowded when the Silver Line opens." He goes on to note that "the initial success of the Silver Line depends on complicated plans to get thousands of Orange Line riders to switch to the Silver Line via bus routes," a daunting challenge. Read the full story [here](#).

Further, a casual ride through the Ballston Corridor in Arlington reveals the breakneck pace of residential development. This will significantly increase the demands on the Metro system.

Cost estimates associated with planning, engineering, design and construction of the task force's transportation plan should be developed and sources of funding identified. In addition, Fairfax County should seek and receive support for the transportation plan from Falls Church City and Arlington County. Planning for any additional density above what is allowed by-right under the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance should be deferred until such time as these two criteria are met.

Fairfax County does not have the authority to adopt an adequate public facilities ordinance. It is unlikely that it ever will. Therefore, the only tool that the Board of Supervisors has to balance land use and transportation is the comprehensive plan. We urge the task force to recommend that the county update the transportation section of the plan and defer any changes to the land use section of the plan until such time as the transportation plan is fully funded and supported by Falls Church City, Arlington County and the Virginia Department of Transportation.

2. The task force should adopt language that ensures that access for traffic to and from new development on the Sears site (Opportunity Site C) – residential, retail and commercial – in Seven Corners will be directly from Route 7, not Patrick Henry Drive.

We are deeply concerned that the Folger-Pratt proposal for redevelopment of the Sears site, which was presented to the community in conjunction with your presentation, would increase cut-through traffic in Ravenwood Park and create traffic chaos at the intersection of Patrick Henry Drive and Route 7, particularly for vehicles travelling north on Patrick Henry Drive. The plan includes no improvements to the intersection.

Therefore, we urge the task force to include language in the plan to require that all ingress and egress to new development on the Sears site be from and to Route 7. Further we ask that the task force include language to ensure that Juniper Lane is not realigned to create an intersection with Patrick Henry Drive.



3. We urge the task force to revert to the mixed use and density levels for the Sears site approved by the task force in November 2013 and oppose the increased density levels approved at the request of the Folger-Pratt task force member.

The mixed use and density levels adopted by the task force in November will provide a better integration of the Sears site with the surrounding community. That should be your vision, your goal.

The mixed use originally approved the task force includes more reasons for residents in the surrounding communities to see the site as a destination for work and leisure opportunities. It will not be a residential enclave, but a mixed use community that is walkable, open and inviting. In contrast, the Folger-Pratt request is heavily residential, envisioning over 600 residential units. The minimal amount of retail space suggested by the developer is insufficient.

There has been much debate and discussion in our community about the new elementary school that will be opened in the former Fairfax County office building that is next to the Sears site. The school will be at or near its capacity when it opens. Adopting the mixed use and density levels originally approved by the task force will ease pressure on the new school.

Finally, we appreciate the proposal by the developer to support a loop route through the Sears site to help accommodate traffic flow to and from the school. However, we strongly oppose any effort to use this as a bargaining chip or tradeoff for additional density on the Sears site. To ensure that this does not happen, we strongly encourage the task force to include language in the plan amendment to ensure that accommodating traffic to and from the school is mandatory requirement for redevelopment of the Sears site.

Finally, we encourage you in the strongest possible terms to adopt a proposal for the revitalization of Seven Corners and, in particular, redevelopment of the Sears site that reflects the vision of the surrounding community, not the short-term whims of the marketplace.

In summary, we look forward to continuing to work with you to develop a plan for the revitalization of Seven Corners that balances land use and the transportation we have and are likely to have.

The history of Fairfax County is one where development has far outpaced our ability to improve transportation and other public facilities. Let's not let that happen in Seven Corners.

Sincerely,

John F. Iekel, President, RPCA

Jessica Swanson, Vice President, RPCA

Mark Doehnert, Treasurer, RPCA

Idie Badie, Secretary, RPCA

Marty Machowsky, At-large Board Member, RPCA



Cc: Penny Gross, Supervisor, Mason District  
Sharon Bulova, Chairman Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
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